

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 04683 101457Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 101344Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9795
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 4683

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ENRG, PFOR, MNUC, BE
SUBJECT: BELGIAN VIEWS ON U.S. NUCLEAR POLICY

REF: BRUSSELS 4300

1. THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT HAS RESPONDED BY NOTE VERBALE
TO THE U.S. NUCLEAR POLICY ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT CARTER
APRIL 7. THE BELGIAN NOTE STATES BELGIUM'S AGREEMENT
WITH THE U.S. ON THE GOAL OF NON-PROLIFERATION AND WILLING-
NESS TO STRENGTHEN AND IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF IAEA
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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 04683 101457Z

CONTROLS. IT THEN EXPLAINS THAT, BECAUSE OF THE PROFOUND
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND EUROPEAN COUNTRIES LIKE
BELGIUM IN ENERGY RESOURCES, BELGIUM NEEDS TO BE SURE IT CAN
SUPPLY ITS ENERGY NEEDS AND KEEP EXISTING FACILITIES OPERATING,
INCLUDING REPROCESSING AND FUEL FABRICATION FACILITIES. BELGIUM
FULLY EXPECTS TO CARRY OUT ITS NON-PROLIFERATION COMMITMENTS,
INCLUDING NUCLEAR SUPPLIER GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS. IT INTENDS

TO REMAIN ATTACHED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF FREE CIRCULATION OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL AND EQUIPMENT WITHIN THE EC, WITH IAEA VERIFICATION OF EURATOM CONTROLS.

2. THE BELGIUM NOTE THEN ASKS FOR U.S. ASSURANCE THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPLY ENRICHED URANIUM AND URANIUM ORE FOR INSTALLED REACTORS AND FOR ENRICHMENT FACILITIES, FUTURE OPERATION OF REACTORS, AND PARTICIPATION IN JOINT PROJECTS WITHIN THE EC. FINALLY, THE BELGIAN NOTE RAISES THE QUESTION WHETHER THE U.S. POLICY CONTRADICTS THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE IV OF THE NPT, AND REMARKS THAT ARTICLE IV WAS A NECESSARY COUNTERPART TO ARTICLE II IN ORDER TO SATISFY THE NEEDS OF NON-NUCLEAR WEAPONS STATES.

3. ON MAY 6 WE INFORMED HERPELS, FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR FOR ATOMIC AFFAIRS, THAT PROVISION OF HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM FOR THE BR2 REACTOR HAD BEEN APPROVED BY PRESIDENT CARTER (STATE 102480--NOTAL). SHE EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT THAT DECISION. ON MAY 9, IN ADDITION TO RECEIVING THE ABOVE-MENTIONED NOTE, WE WERE CALLED BY FONTAINE, DIRECTOR FOR SCIENTIF AFFAIRS (HERPELS' BOSS), WHO ASKED AGAIN WHETHER THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO APPROVE DELIVERIES OF URANIUM ORE AND ENRICHED URANIUM FOR SUPPLY OF BELGIUM'S NUCLEAR POWER REACTORS AND FUEL FABRICATION FACILITY (SEE REFTTEL PARA 7).

4. COMMENT. BELGIUM'S EXISTING NUCLEAR POWER INFRASTRUCTURE IS LARGELY BASED ON PLUTONIUM TECHNOLOGY. BESIDES OPERATING EXPERIMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL REACTORS, THE BELGIANS FABRICATE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BRUSSE 04683 101457Z

PLUTONIUM FUEL AT BELGONUCLEAIRE; THEIR TECHNOLOGY AS WELL AS THE MATERIAL HAS EXPORT VALUE. IN ADDITION, WHILE DECISIONS HAVE YET TO BE FINALIZED, THE BELGIANS APPARENTLY PLAN TO MAKE USE OF THE EXISTING BUT IDLE EUROCHEMIC REPROCESSING FACILITY, POSSIBLY AS A JOINT PROJECT WITH OTHER EC COUNTRIES. U.S. POLICY STATEMENTS, INCLUDING MOST RECENTLY THE MAY 2 SALZBURG SPEECH BY DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY NYE, MAY GIVE MIXED SIGNALS ON HOW THE U.S. INTENDS TO DEAL WITH THE BELGIUM SITUATION. THE BELGIANS ARE EXTREMELY NERVOUS ABOUT THE AMBIGUITY OF THEIR SITUATION, GIVEN THE ENORMOUS INVESTMENT THEY HAVE PUT INTO THE PLUTONIUM NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE. THEY ARE EXPRESSING THEIR CONCERNS THUS FAR IN A GUARDED, DISCREET MANNER, NO DOUBT HOPING THAT THE U.S. WILL TAKE THE HINT AND OFFER THE DESIRED ASSURANCES WITHOUT THE NECESSITY OF A CONFRONTATION. EARLY GUIDANCE WOULD BE APPRECIATED.

5. EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF TEXT BELGIAN NOTE BEING TRANSMITTED SEPTTEL, AND FRENCH ORIGINAL BEING POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT.RENNER

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